



Inspired Living in Rhode Island

Promoting choice, community, and
opportunity for older Rhode Islanders
and those with disabilities



Inspired Living in Rhode Island is dedicated to
all Rhode Islanders whose light and love
continue to guide our path forward.

Acknowledgments

Inspired Living in Rhode Island is made possible by the many partners and friends who participated in listening and think tank sessions throughout the Summer and Fall of 2018 – as well as those involved in earlier efforts to strengthen how we care for and empower older Rhode Islanders and those with disabilities. A special thank you to:

Mario Bueno, Progreso Latino; Virginia Burke, RI Health Care Association; Shaun Cournoyer, The Friendly Nursing Home; Susan Cornell, Bayberry Commons; Robin Covington, East Bay Community Action; Winfield S. Danielson III and Lydia Wagner, Providence VA Medical Center; Susan DiMasi, The South Kingstown Senior Center; Nicole Fallon, Scandinavian Communities; Emmanuel Falck, SEIU; Kathy Heren and Donna Lonschein, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office; Steve Horowitz, Saint Elizabeth Community; Hilary Jansson, Community College of Rhode Island; Tom Kane, Access Point RI; Linda Katz, Economic Progress Institute; Joan Kwiatkowski and Lauren Lapolla Grossman, PACE RI; Millie Lukens, The Meadows; Maureen Maigret, Rhode Island Long-Term Care Coordinating Council; Donna Martin, Community Provider Network of Rhode Island; Kathy McKeon, Diocese of Providence; Jim Nyberg, LeadingAge RI; Nicholas Oliver, RI Partnership for Home Care; Sherman Pines and Marjorie Waters, RI Organizing Project; Esther Price, St. Martin de Porres Center; Marianne Raimondo, Rhode Island College; Jody Shue, Age-Friendly RI; Barry Slotnick, Coventry Center; and Catherine Taylor, University of Rhode Island.

We appreciate the partnership of our federal, state, and local government leaders and agencies, including: Rhode Island Lt. Governor Daniel McKee; State Representative Lauren Carson; State Senator Louis DiPalma; State Senator Maryellen Goodwin; State Senator Joshua Miller; the Office of U.S. Senator Jack Reed; Rhode Island Commerce Corporation; Rhode Island Departments of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals; Elderly Affairs; Health; Human Services; Labor & Training; Transportation; and Veterans Affairs; Newport City Councilors Jamie Bova, Lynn Underwood Ceglie and Joanne Napolitano; and the Office of Central Falls Mayor James Diossa.

Design + Photo Credits: *Inspired Living in Rhode Island* was lovingly compiled by the EOHHS Policy & Public Affairs team – Rose Jones, Michael Cronan, Tarah Provencal, Ashley O'Shea, and Brenna McCabe – with support from state agency and community partners. Special thanks also to Kyle Bennett, Meghan Connelly, Ron Desiderato, Ivan Marte, Kim Paull, Kerri Zanchi, Advocates in Action, PACE RI, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, Southern Rhode Island Volunteers, and *The Westerly Sun* for contributing priceless photography.

Introduction

Our older adult population in Rhode Island is growing rapidly. By 2030, one in four Rhode Islanders will be 65 or older. Today, nearly 17 percent of Rhode Islanders are 65 or older versus 13 percent nationally. And our state has the highest proportion in the United States of those 85 or older. Some 20 percent of Rhode Islanders have some form of disability. And of Rhode Island's 61,000 veterans, 70 percent are over 55 years old.

A significant portion of this population depends on long-term care provided by the State and its partners. While Rhode Island is a healthcare leader and continues to strengthen its healthcare system, work remains to ensure our system is nimble and fully responsive to people's diverse needs and preferences as they age.

In May 2018, Governor Gina M. Raimondo announced a multi-phased effort to transform how Rhode Island delivers long-term care and supports to older Rhode Islanders and those with disabilities. The goal: *ensure people have an opportunity to live an inspired life, of their choosing, and receive the right support, at the right time.*

This initiative was informed by earlier action plans and research, including the *Reinventing Medicaid*, *Long-Term Services and Supports Evaluation of Rebalancing Strategies*, and *Aging in Community* reports. And through it, the Governor directed the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health & Human Services and its partners to talk to Rhode Islanders about their experiences and to build on efforts to improve the system.

Inspired Living in Rhode Island details the steps taken in the summer and fall of 2018 to engage Rhode Islanders, healthcare workers, service providers, and community advocates. While not an exhaustive list, a summary of what we heard from these Rhode Islanders is included – along with highlights of relevant current State and community programs. *Inspired Living* also includes some near- and long-term policy actions and investments under consideration that are responsive to consumers' feedback and help to strengthen our healthcare system.



PHOTO: Shirley Howell, 89, visits with her first great grandchild, Rose.

Under Governor Raimondo's leadership, we are working to ensure Rhode Island is a good place to live, work, and grow. Over the last four years, we've:

- Secured federal authority to invest \$160 million to increase care quality and lower healthcare costs through the Health System Transformation Program.
- Secured over \$28 million in federal funding to support intergenerational programs, respite and caregiver supports, among other initiatives, that help older adults and those with disabilities thrive in the community.
- Invested \$6.8 million to expand supported-employment programs + provide training that better connects those with disabilities with rewarding jobs.
- Doubled funding to senior centers, with all 39 cities + towns receiving funding.
- Raised wages for direct support professionals for the past three years to strengthen our workforce and improve care for Rhode Islanders.
- Increased funding for home-delivered meals to better connect people with healthful foods.
- Closed all sheltered workshops in the state for people with disabilities, transitioning them into community-based day and employment programs.

(L) Pearl Gallioux, member of St. Martin de Porres Senior Center, during a listening session with EOHHS staff;
(R) Listening session with members and staff of Advocates In Action.



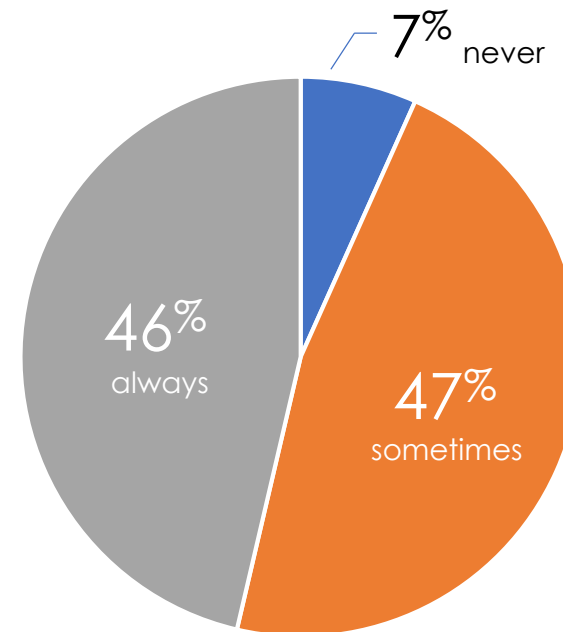
What We Did

Over the Summer of 2018, we partnered with organizations across the state to convene 14 listening sessions. We visited senior centers, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, adult day programs, advocacy organizations, high-rise affordable housing manors, the Rhode Island Veterans Home, and more. We traveled from Woonsocket to Wakefield, Burrillville to Newport. And we heard from consumers and caregivers to administrators and frontline staff.

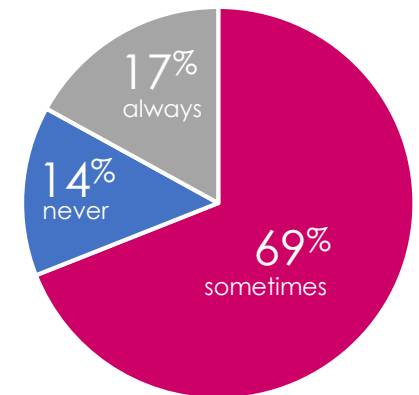
To extend our reach, we partnered with Meals on Wheels to conduct a survey of its customers. Over 200 people participated, providing valuable insight into their experiences and confirming what we were hearing in listening sessions. Among the major concerns people shared were access to healthful foods, information, and transportation as well as workforce shortages.

During the summer, we also convened a Workforce Policy Think Tank – comprised of business, community, academia and government leaders. Over three sessions, the group tackled topics, ranging from roles and responsibilities to recruitment and retention, and reviewed innovative workforce initiatives across the country.

In all, we engaged more than 500 Rhode Islanders. This feedback informed the actions and investments outlined in this deckbook.



"I feel like I have all the help I need to live comfortably in my own home"



of those who do not have consistent help (54% from previous chart)

"I want or need a service but do not know how to access it"

Source: 2018 Meal On Wheels Survey



Dulce "Chula" Marte, 70, of Providence, with her daughter, granddaughter, and great grandsons.

What We Heard

Quality of life matters and is often associated with a person's experience of community. Overwhelmingly, people shared the importance of their community to their overall happiness and health. The definition of community varied wildly, with some relating it to a familiar neighborhood or setting and others, to a regular social gathering, friend, or helper.

While some topics were unique to a session, quality of life was a thread throughout all conversations. Other common themes that emerged, included:

- Getting Information & Assistance
- Improving Transportation
- Strengthening the Workforce

Many advocates and providers also expressed the need for the State to accelerate improvements to RIBridges and to consider moving the Division of Elderly Affairs, currently within the Department of Human Services, to its own State department.

Detailed in this section is what we heard from participants, organized by the above four central themes: quality of life, information, transportation, and workforce.



What We Heard:

Quality of Life

matters and how it's
defined varies – by person
and by stage of life.

PHOTO: Paul Yurof of Hope Valley
enjoys a visit to Jaswell Farm in
Smithfield, Rhode Island, with his
great nephew, Cameron.

During listening sessions, older adults and Rhode Islanders with disabilities expressed a desire to control their own destiny and have a say in the direction of their care. People shared concerns about their ability to live well as they age – given worries over finances, mobility, food access + health and wellness. And they expressed concerns about ageism and being perceived as expendable by others, leading to feelings of being left out, marginalized, and underestimated.

Key issues raised by listening session participants that influence a person's quality of life include:

Wellness + Community

Limited mobility or not having access to help can lead to feelings of isolation. Participants discussed the importance of socialization to good health and expanding the opportunities available for people to be active and with others.

Assistive Technology

Having access to assistive devices is critical for people experiencing hearing, voice, speech, sight or language barriers. Participants shared that it can be challenging to access these needed supports, given the expense and not all devices being covered by insurance.

Food Security

Food security is defined as the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and an assured ability to acquire those foods without relying on the emergency food system. For many participants, access to healthful (i.e., medically appropriate) food is a significant concern. The majority of older Rhode Islanders we talked to (outside of those living in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities) met the definition of food insecure, relying on congregate meal sites or programs like Meals on Wheels for all or part of their daily food.

Employment

Disability providers and consumers acknowledged the progress Rhode Island has made to increase employment opportunities but also shared a desire for the state to do more to encourage local businesses to hire people with disabilities.

Concerns over other social determinants of health (i.e., housing), immigration policies, and healthcare expenses (i.e., prescription drugs) were also raised by participants as negatively impacting quality of life.

What We Heard:

Information & Assistance

matter and can some times
be hard to access.



All Rhode Islanders deserve access to the support they need, when they need it. For some older Rhode Islanders, those with disabilities, and their caregivers, getting timely, accurate information and help in times of need was identified as an area of challenge. During listening sessions, people expressed wanting to know about current programs and where to turn for guidance during an emergency – but also before one happens.

Specifically, consumers desire a system that:

- Is easy to access through a phone call. People want someone who they can consistently reach when they need assistance.
- Includes a central repository of information that can be easily accessed by caregivers, consumers, and/or professionals in the field.
- Better coordinates care + connects service providers in a more meaningful way.
- Provides support for families and caregivers, such as respite care.
- Promotes continuity of care + guards against disruption in service.
- Considers the whole person + addresses people's unique needs.

What We Heard:

Transportation

matters and is more than roads and bridges. It's access to livable, walkable communities and reliable transit services.

In listening sessions, people often associated the ability to freely travel between the doctor's office, market, jobs, or social centers with quality of life. The need for transit services that are reliable, affordable, and mobility appropriate was a central tenet of conversation.

Conversation also centered around issues with Medicaid's non-emergency medical transportation service and needed roadway repairs and safety improvements as impediments to accessing local markets, pharmacies and parks. This was especially true in the more rural stretches of the state, where amenities are more spread out and bus service and sidewalks are limited.

For those living in senior housing or other facilities, shuttle services may be available for special outings; however, a fee may apply, which places a financial burden on some seniors.

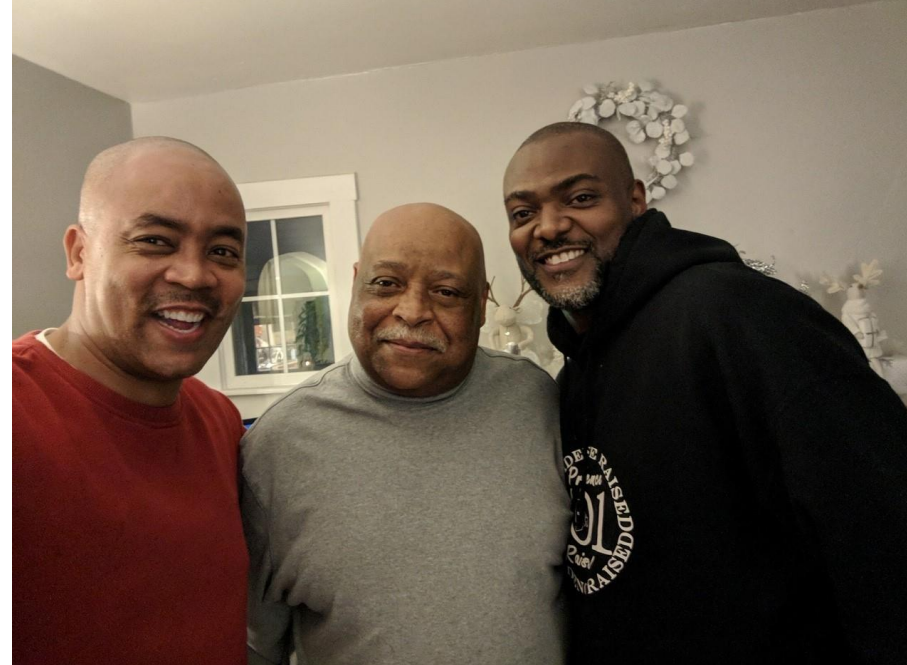


PHOTO: Ron Brewer, 62 of Lincoln, visits with friends, Kyle and Irving.

What We Heard: Workforce

matters. A strong relationship between staff and consumer can make all the difference.

Rhode Island, like the nation, faces a direct-care worker shortage. Through listening sessions, Think Tank meetings, and other forums, we asked providers, frontline workers, caregivers, and consumers about their experiences and solicited their ideas to strengthen the workforce. Among the ideas shared were:

- Increasing staff wages + reducing turnover rates
- Addressing barriers to entry – e.g., training, testing, fees
- Increasing the diversity of the workforce
- Enhancing career ladders + incentives
- Strengthening the specialized workforce – e.g., behavioral healthcare and dementia
- Addressing the stigma associated with direct-care work
- Increasing provider reimbursement rates

Many consumers identified staff turnover as their top concern, given the disruption it creates in their daily lives and continuity of care. Some participants also expressed the desire to better pay staff and encouraged the State to support this aim, while promoting how personally fulfilling (referred to as the “hidden paycheck”) direct-support work can be. Providers also encouraged the State to leverage existing workforce development programs in Rhode Island to attract talent into the long-term healthcare field.



What We're Doing

Rhode Island continues to make progress in strengthening its long-term care system. Across the state, efforts are underway to address many of the concerns raised during listening sessions; this includes promoting choice and more coordinated care, investing in food access and our workforce – to name a few.

Summarized in this section are current actions and investments by theme: quality of life, information & assistance, transportation, and workforce.

A related effort, *Let's Talk Mental Health*, is also underway to strengthen our state's behavioral healthcare system. Mental health and substance use disorders affect all Rhode Island communities. In May 2018, Governor Raimondo directed State agencies via executive order to develop an action plan to ensure parity between physical and behavioral healthcare and to strengthen access to and awareness of available treatment. Together with partners, the State has begun the work to evaluate this system and make improvements that address the needs of Rhode Islanders across the age and ability spectrum.



What We're Doing:

Quality of Life

Our goal is to ensure Rhode Island is a good place to grow up and grow old. We all deserve the peace of mind that comes with knowing that we can live with dignity and with plentiful opportunities to enjoy the people, places, and experiences we desire.



PHOTO: Anthony Solomon, 86, of Providence, with his great granddaughters.

Governor Raimondo continues to promote investments that ease the burdens seniors and those with disabilities face. Highlights of steps we're taking, along with partners, include:

- **Planning with People at the Center:** We've updated regulations to promote consumer choice + more flexibility for service providers. And together with The Sherlock Center, we've developed a person-centered thinking guide and facilitator training. The training is offered to community partners and providers serving those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities; the goal being to improve the quality and use of person-centered planning in Rhode Island.
- **Building System Capacity:** We invested more than \$10 million in Health Equity Zones across Rhode Island to help communities address social, economic, and environmental determinants of health, which determine 80 percent of a person's health. For more information, visit www.health.ri.gov/hez.
- **Investing in Community Supports:** Over the last four years, we've transitioned nearly 500 seniors from higher-cost institutional settings to community placements of their choosing through Medicaid's Money Follows the Person and Nursing Home Transition programs. And we've doubled the State's investment in senior center services, increasing available funding in State Fiscal Year 2019 from \$400,000 to \$800,000. We're also leveraging more than \$25 million in federal funding to strengthen intergenerational programs, respite and caregiver supports, and various other initiatives designed to help older adults and those with disabilities thrive in the community; this includes respite support for caregivers of people with special needs, grandparents caring for minor children, and caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.
- **Improving Food Access:** In 2017, Rhode Island released its first statewide food strategy to grow the local food economy and tackle hunger in the state. We also increased funding to safety-net programs, such as Meals on Wheels. For more information, visit www.relishrhody.com.
- **Easing Financial Burdens:** We exempted social security benefits from state income tax for those under certain income limits + provided tax relief for military veterans. A state income tax exemption also applies for all retirees who have reached the full social security retirement age. In addition, through Rhode Island's ABLE program, young people with disabilities and their families can access low-cost banking and investment products to help them save money without triggering a freeze in federal benefits, such as Medicaid. Savings can be used for education, health and wellness, housing, transportation, and assistive technology. For more information, visit www.ri.savewithable.com.



Jesse Lanterman with her boss, Maria Allen. Jesse has been a salon assistant at Bella Vita Salon in Westerly for five years. Photo Courtesy of *The Westerly Sun*

Investing in inclusive workplaces

We all deserve an opportunity to live an inspired life of our choosing. In Rhode Island, we are committed to nurturing an environment where people come first and Rhode Islanders of all ages and abilities can realize their dreams and potential.

Rhode Island is an Employment First state, a designation we take seriously. We've closed all nine sheltered workshops in the state. Our goal: connect people to good jobs with fair wages in the community – and link Rhode Island businesses to talented employees.

Rhode Island's average employment rate for people with developmental disabilities is above the national rate.

Together with partners, we're:

- Investing \$6.8 million to expand supported-employment programs, provide training, and better connect people with rewarding jobs.
- Implementing performance-based contracting, promoting person-centered planning and employment outcomes. Some 767 people have been enrolled in the supported employment pilot program, with 343 job placements completed to date.
- Expanding Rhode Island's successful Project Search program, which connects high-school students with disabilities with internships at local businesses; the program will now be available to adults, ages 21 to 30. To date, 57 students have graduated from Project Search.
- Investing \$1 million in workforce programming through the Governor's Workforce Board for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. More than 150 people have participated in funded training programs.
- Providing training to Rhode Islanders with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are interested in careers in retail through an innovative partnership with CVS. The program offers up to 10 weeks of classroom instruction that includes hands-on experience in a mock CVS store – complete with real CVS products and technology.

Investing in active living

We are committed to promoting health and ensuring all Rhode Islanders have opportunities to be active and connect with each other and to the supports they need to thrive.



Rhode Island is known for its natural beauty. The state is home to more than 400 miles of walking trails, such as the Heritage Trail in Richmond. Opened in 2017, the trail stretches over a mile and is accessible to people of all ages and abilities. It meanders through the forest, with a wooden boardwalk and footbridge with rails to guide the way. An elevated picnic platform and access ramps allow people to enjoy lunch along the journey. The state continues to invest in enhancing its network of parks and natural areas and strives for **universal accessibility** in all new recreational projects. For more information about outdoor recreation in Rhode Island, visit www.dem.ri.gov.



Per Rhode Island's Complete Streets law, the design of transportation infrastructure projects must consider all users of roadways. Several communities have advanced green + complete streets policies, in partnership with Health Equity Zones, to improve roadway safety for users of all ages and abilities and to help protect the environment.



Across the state, communities are putting senior center funding to good use to support older Rhode Islanders:



Cranston + Coventry are investing over \$90,000 to support social casework, field wellness visits by trained clinicians.



Warwick, West Warwick + Middletown are investing over \$100,000 to enhance transportation services for their seniors.



North Providence + Narragansett are investing nearly \$50,000 to strengthen fitness, wellness, and nutrition programs.



East Providence is connecting high-school seniors with elders to promote inter-generational understanding and bonds.



The cost of one year of home delivered meals in Rhode Island is equal to the cost of one day in the hospital for a Rhode Island senior.*

Rhode Island is known for its vibrant food scene and rich agricultural heritage. Under Governor Raimondo's leadership, we've continued to grow our local food economy and set ambitious goals to tackle hunger in the state. The Governor's Hunger Elimination Task Force – comprised of community, business and government leaders – is working to reduce food insecurity in Rhode Island from 12.8 percent to 10 percent by 2020. Learn more at www.relishrhody.com.



Investing in healthy eating

Social factors, such as poverty and access to nutritious food, play a significant role in our health and quality of life. Together with partners, we're investing in social determinants of health and working to ensure all Rhode Islanders eat well.

Nationally, nearly nine percent of older adults are food insecure. Among the efforts underway to connect older adults and Rhode Islanders with disabilities to healthful foods are:

- **Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program:** Older adults in need can exchange coupons for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.
- **Congregate + Home-Delivered Meals:** Last year, 600,000 meals were served to older adults in Rhode Island. Research shows that receiving daily delivered meals along with socialization opportunities reduces seniors' feelings of isolation and improves mental and physical health. Governor Raimondo restored \$300,000 in state funding to Meals on Wheels during her first year and has maintained that commitment every year since.
- **Health Equity Zones (HEZ):** Many Rhode Island communities are tackling food insecurity through HEZ partnerships, which bring local organizations together to identify and address their community's needs. Example: The Bristol HEZ is providing cooking demonstrations to help seniors eat healthier at home. Many HEZs are partnering with the *Food on the Move* mobile produce market to connect residents with culturally relevant, affordable fruits and vegetables.
- **Capital City Café:** Through a partnership between the State and Meals on Wheels, the Café provides hot, nutritious meals to seniors at eight locations around Providence. Each month, SAGE Rhode Island hosts a Café at the Church of the Transfiguration in Cranston for seniors in the LGBT community for a meal, entertainment, and learning session.
- **Senior Community Table:** Age-Friendly RI, in partnership with the Lt. Governor's Long-Term Care Coordinating Council, hosts dining opportunities for seniors at local restaurants, providing opportunities for older Rhode Islanders to meet new people and enjoy a meal and conversation. For more information about Age-Friendly RI events, visit www.agefriendlyri.org/events.

* Refers to Meals on Wheels program

What We're Doing: Information & Assistance

Our goal is to ensure people can easily get information and understand their options.

All Rhode Islanders deserve timely access to information and support when they need it. We are continuing to improve the services and programs available to achieve this end.

- **Resource Listing:** Rhode Island publishes an annual *Guide to Services for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities* (aka Pocket Manual). The guide is available online at www.dea.ri.gov. Print copies are available at the Rhode Island Division of Elderly Affairs offices, while supplies last. In partnership with the Family Caregiver Alliance of Rhode Island, the State recently launched a family caregiver web portal that provides useful tools and information, www.fcari.org.
- **Options Counseling:** Seniors and people with disabilities may contact The POINT for information about long-term services and supports in Rhode Island. In addition, during Medicare open enrollment, Rhode Island's Senior Health Insurance Program hosts a series of events to assist people in reviewing their options and making coverage changes.
- **Veterans Support:** RIServes is the nation's first statewide referral network for veterans. The network consists of more than 35 providers who work together to coordinate care and make it easier for veterans and their caregivers to access services. For more information, visit www.riserves.org.
- **Fraud Prevention:** The Rhode Island Senior Medicare Patrol helps Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers prevent, detect, and report healthcare fraud, errors, and abuse: 401.462.0931.
- **Elder Safety:** Report elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation to 401.462.0555.
- **Long-Term Care Financial Assistance:** Those receiving financial support from the state for long-term care services should call the Department of Human Services at 401.415.8455 with questions about their case.
- **Transition Support:** In partnership with the Rhode Island Parent Information Network, we are helping families to transition young adults with developmental disabilities from the school system to adult services. For more information, call 401.270.0101.
- **UNITY Plan Transition:** Rhode Island Medicaid recently ended the UNITY plan administered by Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, transitioning members into other Medicaid programs. This change will result in better care management and lower costs to the state. For more information or for assistance, call 1.844.749.8323.



Located at the United Way of RI, THE POINT connects seniors and those with disabilities to long-term care information and resources. Some 70,000 calls and walk-ins are received annually. To access The POINT, call 401.462.4444.



What We're Doing: **Transportation**

Our goal is to ensure Rhode Islanders can safely access the places and opportunities that promote health and bring value to their lives.

Getting Around

- Most Medicaid members qualify for free transportation for non-emergency medical trips. In January 2019, MTM Transportation Services – which operates in 28 U.S. states – came online as the State's new Non-Emergency Medical Transportation services vendor. The Executive Office of Health & Human Services is hiring a manager to oversee this contract + closely evaluate the vendor's performance. For a nominal fee, transportation services (including to meal sites) are also provided via MTM for Rhode Islanders age 60+ through the State's Elderly Transportation Program. For more information or to schedule service, call 1.855.330.9131.
- Through volunteer networks, the Providence Village of Rhode Island and Southern Rhode Island Volunteers provide rides to seniors living in the community who no longer drive. For more information, visit www.providencevillageri.org or www.southernrivol.org.
- Last year, Rhode Island updated its [Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan](#). It includes an analysis of the current service options and needs + sets forth recommendations to improve services. In addition, the state's Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council, convened by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) at the direction of the General Assembly, recently submitted recommendations to Governor Raimondo and the General Assembly to strengthen specialized transportation services in Rhode Island. RIPTA also hired a planner with an exclusive focus on human services transportation.



Improving Infrastructure

- Under the State Transportation Improvement Program, over \$1 billion in federal funding is projected to be leveraged through Federal Fiscal Year 2021 to improve state roadways for all users. For a list of included projects, visit www.planning.ri.gov.
- Signed into law in 2016, RhodeWorks is a 10-year, \$4.7 billion investment program to improve the state's transportation system. Through it, more than 650 bridges will be repaired across Rhode Island. To date, 58 projects have been completed, with another 134 scheduled for completion by the end of 2019.



Seniors and those with disabilities travel RIPTA regular route buses for half price during off-peak hours. A no-fare program is available for those with low incomes. Persons unable to use regular routes due to disability may qualify for RIPTA's paratransit program, Ride. For more information, visit www.ripta.com.

What We're Doing: **Workforce**

We are committed to creating meaningful employment opportunities in healthcare for Rhode Islanders and ensuring people who need assistance receive the best possible care.

Rhode Island has gone from having one of the highest unemployment rates in the country to the lowest rate the state has seen in nearly 20 years. More Rhode Islanders are employed today than at any other time in more than a decade. But like many states, Rhode Island faces a shortage of talent in healthcare disciplines. The State continues to invest in strengthening the healthcare workforce, through efforts such as:

- Governor Raimondo supported wage increases for direct-support professionals for the past three years. The State Fiscal Year 2019 budget included a 10 percent increase for home-care, frontline staff and a 20 percent increase for licensed professional staff. An annual inflation increase to service providers' base rate in future years was also included.
- Through the Health System Transformation Program, the State is working to transform how it pays for and delivers healthcare in Rhode Island. As part of the effort, \$9 million is being invested in our local healthcare workforce through partnerships with the state's higher-learning institutions. Funding will enhance education and training for certificate through pre-doctoral students and current workers + help respond to market needs, such as building a specialized, culturally-competent workforce with expertise in integrated behavioral healthcare, social determinants of health, and team-based care.
- CNA training is offered through career & technical education programs in Rhode Island high schools, including Chariho, Coventry, East Providence, Pilgrim, Woonsocket, Davies, and Cranston West.
- Through the Department of Labor & Training Real Pathways program, CrossroadsRI, the Newport Community School, and the Genesis Center are collaborating with community partners on training for CNAs, medical technicians, and medical assistants.



Through the State Innovation Model Test Grant – a federal investment of \$20 million in Rhode Island's healthcare system, we launched the **Community Preceptor Institute** in partnership with several of the state's institutions of higher learning. Through the Institute, undergrad and graduate students in the health field are receiving community-based care training and helping to address social determinants of health.



What We Will Do

Governor Raimondo is committed to transforming our healthcare system into one that takes every Rhode Islander into account and meets their unique needs. In response to what we learned through the *Inspired Living* forums, we are taking action to further invest in the healthcare workforce, strengthen community supports, and connect people to the resources they need.

At the same time, we are taking the long view, evaluating the continuum of long-term care services in Rhode Island, with the goal to transform the system in line with people's needs + desires. And we're in the process of finalizing the *2019 – 2023 State Plan on Aging*, which takes a comprehensive look at our system of care for seniors. This complementary effort will provide additional insights and recommendations to improve available services. Similarly, the state's new Alzheimer's Disease State Plan will serve as a blueprint for action in addressing Alzheimer's in Rhode Island. The disease affects 23,000 Rhode Islanders and their families and caregivers.

PHOTO: Governor Raimondo with Sylvia Dulgarian, a Warwick resident and member of the Pilgrim Senior Center. Sylvia also volunteers for the State's Senior Health Insurance Program, providing counseling to local seniors on their Medicare options.

2019/20: At a Glance

INVESTMENTS + INITIATIVES



Wellness, Choice
+ Community



Food +
Nutrition



Workforce +
Employment



Information
+ Assistance



Transportation
Support



Increase wages to attract, retain a quality direct-support workforce + improve care for consumers



Expand the State's home + community care co-pay program to help more seniors remain independent



Expand the Aging & Disability Resource Center network + develop a robust online portal



Implement grant program to help seniors + those with disabilities thrive in the community



Explore community partnerships to improve seniors' access to healthful foods + expand the Rhode to End Hunger program



Launch the Unified Social Services Directory in partnership with United Way of Rhode Island



Connect seniors to behavioral healthcare via BH LINK 24/7 crisis & triage center elder liaisons



Invest in the State's transportation programs that connect older adults + those with disabilities to vital resources.



Implement an Independent Provider model to promote choice in care + new workforce opportunities



Improve access to information + resources for people with Alzheimer's + provide specialized training to providers



Promote healthcare careers via existing State workforce programs, such as RealJobs + explore RI Promise integration



Explore ways to increase the pass rate for the CNA test + to make training, testing more accessible + reflective of the community served



Make Elderly Affairs + Veterans Affairs new offices within the Executive Office of Health & Human Services



Work toward a "No Wrong Door" system for long-term care in Rhode Island that streamlines case management + improves access to care for Rhode Islanders



What We Will Do:

Quality of Life

PHOTO: Josephine Raimondo of Smithfield taking in the fragrance and beauty of her birthday bouquet.

Older adults and Rhode Islanders with disabilities are important members of our broader Rhode Island family. Our work in State government will continue to be centered around listening to consumers' perspectives, learning from their experiences + responding to their needs. We are exploring a suite of initiatives that respond to what we learned through listening sessions – and which further build upon the progress made to improve our system of care + empowerment. Among them, in State Fiscal Year 2020, we are proposing to move the Division of Elderly Affairs and Office of Veterans Affairs, currently within the Department of Human Services, to the Executive Office of Health & Human Services. Captured below, and on subsequent pages, are additional actions to be taken.

Wellness, Choice & Community



- Exploring alternative payment models + a conflict-free case management model for Rhode Island that ensures compliance and promotes person-centered practices for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Awarding \$500,000 in grants to qualified, local organizations that help seniors and those with disabilities thrive in the community. The funding may support investments in food and nutrition to travel + training opportunities.
- Expanding the Department of Elderly Affairs' co-pay program, which assists seniors who do not qualify for Medicaid, but need help, to live independently.
- Pursuing legislation to better protect older Rhode Islanders from abuse and neglect.
- Updating State regulations to streamline, provide better guidance to providers, align with federal policies + better coordinate services across the Office of Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, and Division of Developmental Disabilities.
- Exploring opportunities for "dementia friendly" restaurants in Rhode Island + piloting a program with primary care practices to improve end-of-life planning and social determinants of health screenings. According to the Alzheimer's Association, 26 percent of people in hospice in Rhode Island have a primary diagnosis of dementia.
- Expanding the "Students for Seniors" pilot program, which pairs high-school students with seniors in their community to promote intergenerational understanding and vital connections for seniors.

Food Security



- Expanding participation of the State's Rhode to End Hunger partnership with MEANS, which connects food producers and retailers with local food pantries and meal sites.
- In partnership with Lifespan, better connecting seniors in need to healthful food upon discharge from the hospital.
- Sought and received approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to expand home-delivered meals as a "preventative service" designation to all Medicaid beneficiaries receiving long-term care. Previously, it was a core service for only those with the highest level of need (defined as a person who cannot physically get to a congregate meal site or prepare a meal). Federal approval was also granted to expand resources for caregivers and therapeutic services.

What We Will Do:



Information & Assistance

Among the actions to be pursued:

- The Division of Elderly Affairs is working with community organizations across the state to enhance THE POINT Network Program (PNP). PNP brings together regional Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) partners with the Senior Medicare Patrol and Senior Health Insurance Program to better counsel seniors and those with disabilities on their long-term care options and connect them to appropriate services in their community. In addition, Rhode Island Medicaid has requested federal authority to invest Money Follows the Person funding to improve information available through the ADRC.
- Through the State Innovation Model Test Grant, Rhode Island will develop a comprehensive social services directory, in partnership with United Way of Rhode Island. The directory will connect 2-1-1 and health providers.
- We will expand the RIServes network to provide more resources to Rhode Island's veterans and leverage federal funding to improve people's access to information and resources about Alzheimer's and related dementia disorders. Alzheimer's is the fifth leading cause of death in Rhode Island.
- Planning is underway to establish a "No Wrong Door" system for long-term care in Rhode Island that streamlines case management + improves access and quality of care for Rhode Islanders.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



Rhode Island recently launched the Behavioral Health LINK – a 24/7 crisis & triage center for people struggling with mental illness or substance use disorders. Elder liaisons will be available to address the unique needs of seniors and help connect people to the care they need. The LINK is available day or night at **401.414.LINK (5465)**.



What We Will Do: Transportation

Among the actions to be pursued:

- Community enhancement grant awards will be announced in spring 2019. These grants, funded by Medicaid's Money Follows the Person program, will support efforts that help seniors and those with disabilities thrive in the community. A total of \$500,000 will be awarded.
- Governor Raimondo included an additional \$1.8 million in her State Fiscal Year 2020 budget proposal for Rhode Island's Elderly Transportation Program. The program provides subsidized rides to adults, age 60+, to medical appointments, meal sites, and/or adult-day programs. The Governor's proposal also includes funding for RIPTA's "no-fare" bus pass program, which allows low-income older adults and those with disabilities to ride the bus for free, after being qualified by RIPTA.
- To ensure health and human service agencies are involved in broader transportation planning efforts, the Executive Office of Health & Human Services will be a participant in the State's Transit Forward RI 2040 initiative, which will provide an action plan for enhancing transit services in Rhode Island. In addition, we are exploring participation in development of Rhode Island's [State Transportation Improvement Program](#).



What We Will Do:



Workforce

Healthcare is a growing and vital sector of the Rhode Island economy. But like many states, we face a shortage of qualified workers. In 2019 and 2020, we will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen our healthcare workforce, including raising wages for direct-care staff for the fourth consecutive year.

At the same time, we will further our work to create more inclusive workplaces across industry sectors + ensure that all Rhode Islanders seeking gainful employment have access.

- Governor Raimondo included \$6 million (all funds) in her State Fiscal Year 2020 budget proposal to support a wage increase for direct-support professionals. Also included in her proposal is a rate increase for home-care providers.
- Explore CNA certification as part of RI Promise expansion.
- Focus on healthcare as part of the Department of Labor & Training's RealJobs workforce development program + explore opportunities to address the stigma associated with direct-care jobs, using Health System Transformation funding.
- Explore ways to increase the pass rate for the CNA test, including offering oral test in Spanish. And Explore opportunities to make training + testing more accessible, including a review of fee + curriculum structures.
- Leverage Rhode Island's annual middle-school career fair to promote healthcare careers. And continue, and expand where possible, a focus of CNA training as part of career & technical education in high schools.
- Explore specialized (behavioral health and dementia) training for nursing home staff, leveraging Civil Money Penalty funds.
- Leverage new federal Alzheimer's funding to train primary-care practices + frontline service providers to improve care for people with Alzheimer's.
- Explore increasing access to Rhode Island College's 30-hour behavioral healthcare certificate program for direct-support workers.
- Implement the Independent Provider model in Rhode Island, creating a new pathway to employment in the healthcare sector.

Marilyn Craven, 87, of Cranston, celebrating a fun day at Providence Head Start, where she's worked for the last 48 years.





PHOTO: Dorothy Boisclair, 84, of Westerly, with her daughter, Lisa, and great grandsons, Eli and Jack.

We are striving to ensure people have an opportunity to live an inspired life, of their choosing, and receive the right support, at the right time.

As we move ahead, we are focused on building a healthcare system that promotes choice, community and opportunity for Rhode Islanders and is informed by our broader goals to:

- Preserve and expand access to healthcare;
- Control healthcare spending;
- Promote health and equity; and
- Move toward a person- and community-centered system of care.

Our work to strengthen the continuum of long-term care in Rhode Island is grounded in a commitment to performance and outcomes. We are doing the work within State government to evaluate our system of care, with an eye toward strengthening + better coordinating operations across health and human service agencies, refining our goals + better measuring progress toward them.

Rhode Islanders deserve a healthcare system that meets their needs – providing the right supports, at the right time. Work remains to get there. We're committed, but we can't do it alone. Service providers, advocates, business and community, it will take our collective effort and collaboration.

We look forward to continuing our work with partners to promote healthy, inspired living and to chart the course for the future of long-term care in Rhode Island.



Inspired Living in Rhode Island

Promoting choice, community, and
opportunity for older Rhode Islanders
and those with disabilities

For more information, contact us at:

3 West Road | Cranston, RI 02920

Phone: 401.462.1000

Web: www.ohhs.ri.gov

Twitter: @RIOHHS

Read *Inspired Living* online at
<http://www.eohhs.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/InspiredLiving.pdf>.

